

MEDAL OF HONOR

TIBOR RUBIN





THE MEDAL OF HONOR

THE MEDAL OF HONOR IS THE UNITED STATES MILITARY'S HIGHEST AWARD FOR VALOR IN ACTION AGAINST AN ENEMY. THE MEDAL OF HONOR WAS FIRST AWARDED DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR. TO DATE 3,526 MEDALS OF HONOR HAVE BEEN AWARDED. 1,523 OF THOSE WERE AWARDED FOR ACTIONS DURING THE CIVIL WAR. AT THAT TIME, IT WAS THE ONLY MILITARY AWARD AVAILABLE AND THE CRITERIA HAS EVOLVED TO THE STRICTER MODERN CRITERIA BEFITTING OF THE NATION'S HIGHEST AWARD.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY (NMAJMH) RECOGNIZES SEVENTEEN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS AS BEING OF THE JEWISH FAITH. THEIR STORIES ARE TOLD IN THE JEWISH AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETIES' JEWISH AMERICAN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT EXHIBIT. THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE OF THOSE MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS OF THE JEWISH FAITH... ..



TIBOR RUBIN

STORY ADAPTED FROM SINGLE-HANDED BY DANIEL M. COHEN AND FROM INFORMATION LEARNED FROM YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH TIBOR RUBIN AND THE RUBIN FAMILY.

DEDICATED TO ALL THE JEWISH-AMERICAN SERVICEMEMBERS FROM THE FOUNDING OF OUR GREAT NATION, THROUGH EVERY CONFLICT, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

"I HAVE A DEBT TO PAY. SO, I MADE A PROMISE IF LORD HELP ME I EVER GO TO AMERICA I GONNA BECOME A GI JOE."

"I WASN'T BORN HERE, I WASN'T A CITIZEN. I JUST WAS A LITTLE JEW COMING BACK FROM THE MOST TERRIBLE PLACE AND TO GET THE MEDAL OF HONOR... THAT'S A BIG DEAL"

"IT IS THE BEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD AND I'M PART OF IT NOW. I HAVE SHALOM, PEACE, PEOPLE DIE FOR IT."

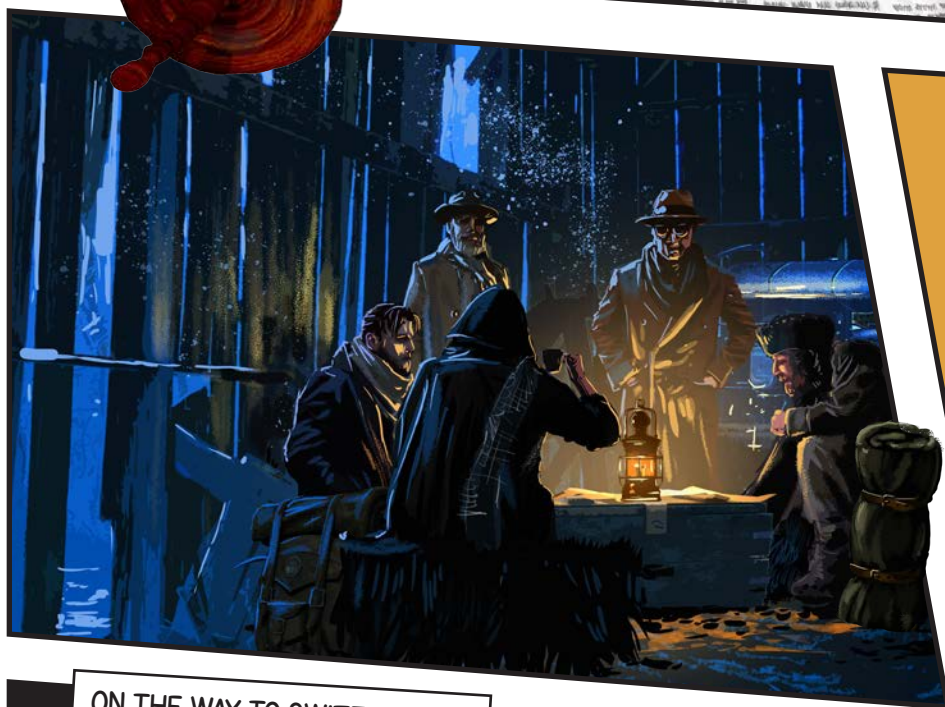
"I HAVE A MOM WHO WAS VERY RELIGIOUS, AND SHE ALWAYS TEACH US: 'THERE IS ONE GOD, AND WE ARE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS. YOU HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BROTHERS, AND SAVE THEM.' TO HER, TO SAVE SOMEBODY'S LIFE IS THE GREATEST HONOR. AND I DID THAT."



BAR MITZVAH

TIBOR RUBIN WAS BORN ON JUNE 18, 1929 AND GREW UP IN PÁSZTÓ, HUNGARY WITH HIS FATHER FERENC, STEP MOTHER, OLDER SISTERS IRENE AND EDITH, OLDER BROTHER EMORY, AND YOUNGER HALF-SISTER ILANKA. FERENC, WAS STRINGENT WITH TIBOR'S HEBREW AND TORAH STUDY, BUT TIBOR WOULD RATHER SKIP CLASS TO PLAY SOCCER OR SEE A MOVIE.

IN JUNE 1943 TIBOR HAD HIS BAR MITZVAH, ACCEPTING THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADULTHOOD IN THE JEWISH FAITH.



ESCAPE PLAN

BY THE WINTER OF 1943 THE SITUATION WAS MORE DANGEROUS FOR JEWS IN HUNGARY, FERENC AND ROSA SENT EMORY TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO HIDE ON A FARM. TIBOR WAS CRUSHED THAT HE WAS SEPARATED WITH HIS OLDER BROTHER.

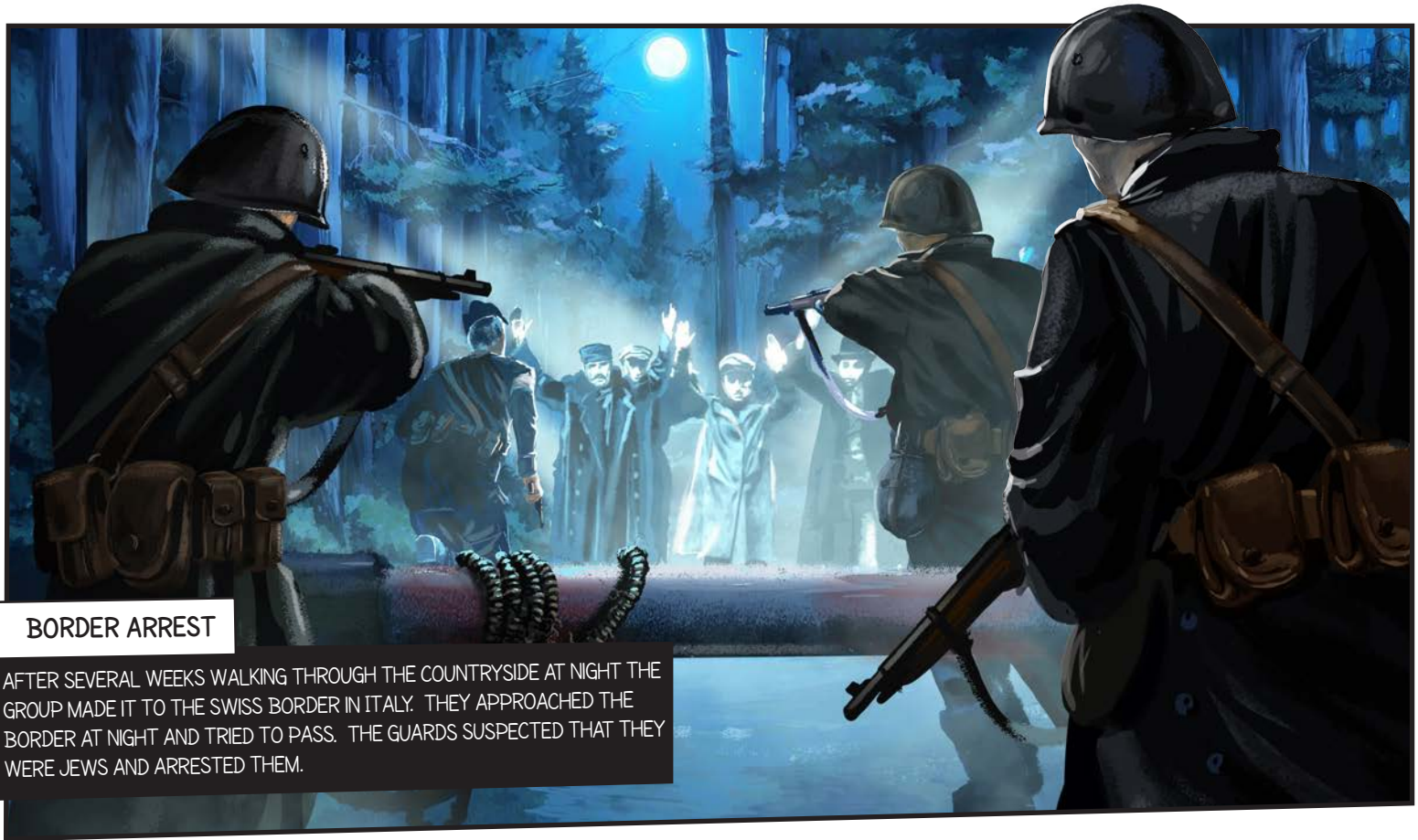
A FEW MONTHS LATER IN MARCH 1944, SOME POLISH REFUGEES SHOWED UP AT THE RUBIN HOUSE. THE GERMANS HAD JUST OCCUPIED BUDAPEST AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT THINGS IN HUNGARY WOULD BECOME MORE DIFFICULT.

THE DECISION WAS MADE THAT TIBOR WOULD LEAVE WITH THE MEN TO SWITZERLAND THE FOLLOWING EVENING. WITHIN A FEW WEEKS HUNGARIAN JEWS WERE BEING ROUNDED UP BY THE GERMANS.

ON THE WAY TO SWITZERLAND

TIBOR WAS NOT ABLE TO SPEAK MUCH WITH HIS COMPANIONS DUE TO THE LANGUAGE BARRIER ON THEIR TREK THROUGH BACKCOUNTRY ROADS AND FORESTS. THEY WOULD TRAVEL AT NIGHT AND REST DURING THE DAY TO AVOID SCRUTINY. TIBOR WOULD SNEAK OFF AND FORAGE FOR FOOD, OFTEN RETURNING WITH ENOUGH FOR BOTH HIMSELF AND HIS COMPANIONS.





BORDER ARREST

AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS WALKING THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE AT NIGHT THE GROUP MADE IT TO THE SWISS BORDER IN ITALY. THEY APPROACHED THE BORDER AT NIGHT AND TRIED TO PASS. THE GUARDS SUSPECTED THAT THEY WERE JEWS AND ARRESTED THEM.

PRISONER TRANSPORT

TIBOR AND HIS POLISH COMPANIONS WERE TAKEN AWAY IN A TRUCK TO MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP



LIFE AT MAUTHAUSEN

SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING AT MAUTHAUSEN, FOR FIVE MONTHS OVER THE SUMMER AND INTO FALL, TIBOR WAS SELECTED FOR A WORK DETAIL OUTSIDE THE CAMP IN THE WOODS. WHILE ON THE WORK DETAIL, TIBOR HONED HIS SKILLS OF SNEAKING OUT OF CAMP TO FIND FOOD USUALLY IN THE TRASH BEHIND THE GERMAN OFFICERS' KITCHEN. HE WAS PROUD OF HIS ABILITY TO SNEAK AROUND TO FIND FOOD AND HIS FELLOW PRISONERS WERE THANKFUL FOR WHAT HE BROUGHT BACK.



FAMILIAR FACE

ONE WINTER MORNING AT ROLL CALL, TIBOR SAW A FAMILIAR YET CHANGED FACE ACROSS THE ROWS OF PRISONERS. IT WAS HIS BROTHER EMORY!

TIBOR WAS OVERJOYED TO BE REUNITED WITH HIS OLDER BROTHER. HE WAS DEVASTATED WHEN EMORY HAD LEFT HOME AND YEARNED TO SEE HIM AGAIN.



MAUTHAUSEN LIBERATION

ON MAY 5, 1945, THE UNITED STATES ARMY'S 11TH ARMORED DIVISION LIBERATED MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP. TIBOR VOWED IF HE EVER MADE IT TO AMERICA, HE WOULD BECOME A GI JOE TO SHOW HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE UNITED STATES ARMY LIBERATING HIM.

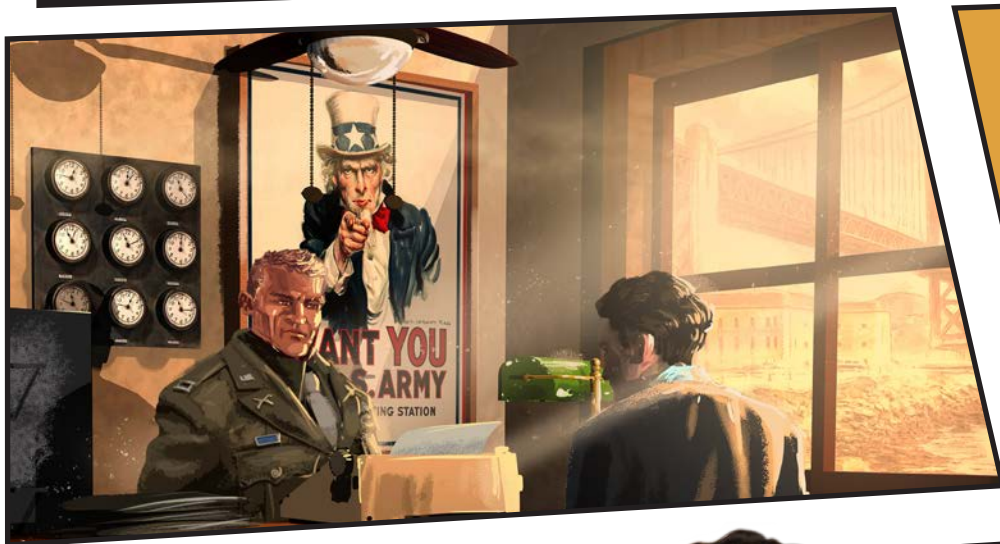
MOST JEWS WOULD REMAIN IN EUROPEAN DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS UNTIL THEY COULD FIND A SPONSOR IN THE UNITED STATES RATHER THAN GOING HOME. TIBOR AND EMORY WERE ABLE TO STAY TOGETHER IN THOSE CAMPS.





ARRIVING TO AMERICA

IN 1948, AFTER THREE YEARS IN DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS TIBOR CROSSED THE ATLANTIC ON THE SS MARINE FLASHER. HE WOULD LOOK UP FRIENDS OF HIS BROTHER IN NEW YORK AND FIND ODD JOBS UNTIL EMORY JOINED HIM LATER.



RECRUITING OFFICE

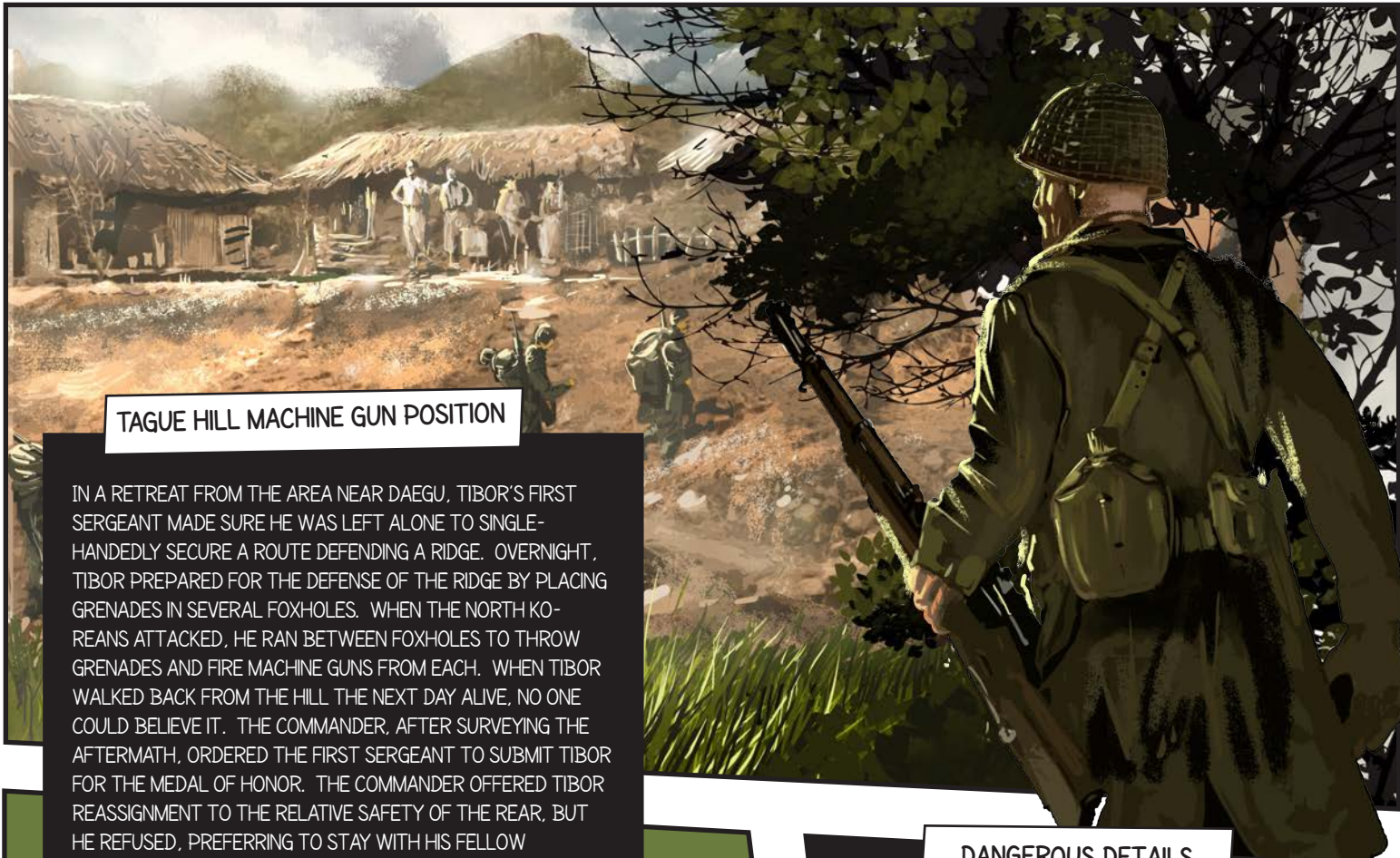
BY FALL 1949 TIBOR HAD MOVED TO OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA TO WORK AT A BUSINESS HIS FRIEND'S FAMILY OWNED. BUT BY SPRING 1950 HE DECIDED TO MAKE GOOD ON HIS PROMISE TO BE A G.I. JOE.

TIBOR WENT TO THE ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE BUT REPEATEDLY FAILED THE REQUIRED ENGLISH TEST. SOME OF THE RECRUITERS, ADMIRING HIS DETERMINATION TO BECOME A SOLDIER, ENSURED HE PASSED THE NEXT TIME.

FORT ORD

TIBOR RUBIN'S PROMISE TO BECOME A SOLDIER WAS FULFILLED WHEN HE ATTENDED BASIC TRAINING AT FORT ORD, CALIFORNIA. SHORTLY THEREAFTER HE WAS SHIPPED FROM CAMP STONEMAN IN PITTSBURG, CALIFORNIA ON THE USS GENERAL NELSON M. WALKER TO OKINAWA FOR ADVANCED INFANTRY TRAINING. WHILE IN OKINAWA, THE KOREAN WAR STARTED AND HIS UNIT LANDED AT POHANG-DONG ON JULY 18, 1950 TO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PUSAN PERIMETER.





TAGUE HILL MACHINE GUN POSITION

IN A RETREAT FROM THE AREA NEAR DAEGU, TIBOR'S FIRST SERGEANT MADE SURE HE WAS LEFT ALONE TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY SECURE A ROUTE DEFENDING A RIDGE. OVERNIGHT, TIBOR PREPARED FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE RIDGE BY PLACING GRENADES IN SEVERAL FOXHOLES. WHEN THE NORTH KOREANS ATTACKED, HE RAN BETWEEN FOXHOLES TO THROW GRENADES AND FIRE MACHINE GUNS FROM EACH. WHEN TIBOR WALKED BACK FROM THE HILL THE NEXT DAY ALIVE, NO ONE COULD BELIEVE IT. THE COMMANDER, AFTER SURVEYING THE AFTERMATH, ORDERED THE FIRST SERGEANT TO SUBMIT TIBOR FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR. THE COMMANDER OFFERED TIBOR REASSIGNMENT TO THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF THE REAR, BUT HE REFUSED, PREFERRING TO STAY WITH HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS. LATER IN THE WAR, TIBOR WAS WOUNDED IN THE LEG BY AN ARTILLERY SHELL. HE WAS ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THE REAR FOR HIS RECOVERY, BUT AGAIN REFUSED.

DANGEROUS DETAILS

TIBOR'S ANTI-SEMITIC FIRST SERGEANT ALWAYS MADE SURE TIBOR WAS ASSIGNED THE MOST DANGEROUS AND DIRTY DUTY AND MISSIONS SUCH AS PERIMETER CHECKS, SCOUTING THE ENEMY, PATROLLING FORWARD LINES, AND STANDING GUARD ALONE. TIBOR DID NOT WANT TO BE A HERO BUT HIS FIRST SERGEANT MADE A HERO OUT OF HIM.



SAVING FELLOW SOLDIER

TIBOR WAS ORDERED TO SCOUT A VILLAGE ALONE. HE REPORTED THAT HE DID NOT SEE THE ENEMY BUT SUSPECTED THEY WERE THERE. THE FIRST SERGEANT DIRECTED TIBOR'S PLATOON TO GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE. THE PLATOON WAS ATTACKED AND THERE WERE MANY CASUALTIES. TIBOR ASKED IF HE COULD GO BACK TO LOOK FOR SURVIVORS BUT THE FIRST SERGEANT SAID THEY WERE ALL DEAD. TIBOR WENT BACK ANYWAY AND FOUND A FRIEND ALIVE FACE DOWN IN A DITCH. TIBOR RESCUED HIS FRIEND AND BROUGHT HIM BACK FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT.



BATTLE OF UNSAN

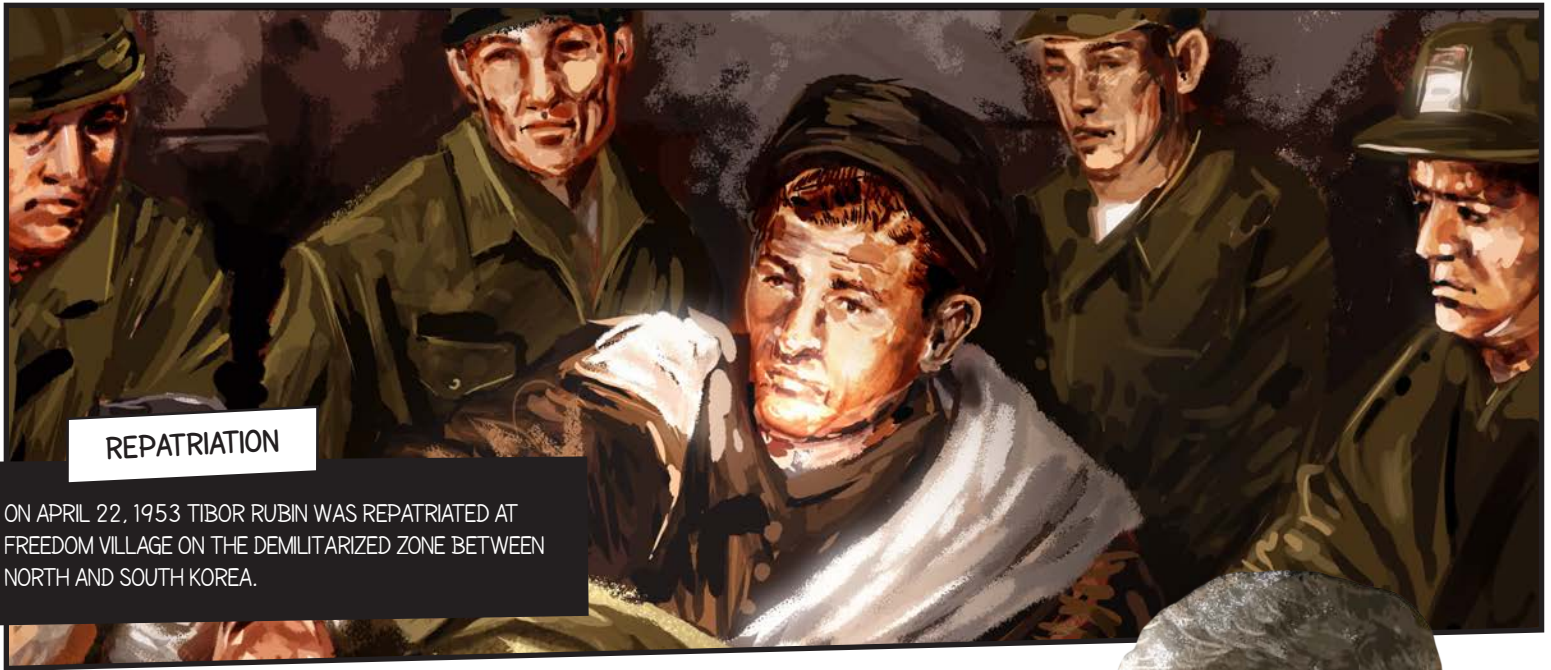
ON OCTOBER 30, 1950 AT THE BATTLE OF UNSAN, CHINESE TROOPS CONDUCTED A MASSIVE NIGHTTIME ASSAULT AGAINST THE AMERICANS NOW FAR INSIDE NORTH KOREA. DURING THE ASSAULT, AFTER THREE PREVIOUS GUNNERS WERE WOUNDED, RUBIN MANNED A .30 CALIBER MACHINE GUN SLOWING THE ENEMY TROOPS' ADVANCE AND PROTECTING HIS UNIT'S RETREAT UNTIL HE RAN OUT OF AMMUNITION. IN THE ENSUING BATTLE, RUBIN WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AND CAPTURED.



CAMP 5

RUBIN SPENT THE NEXT 30 MONTHS AS A PRISONER IN CAMP 5, A CHINESE POW CAMP NEAR PYOKTONG, ALONG THE YALU RIVER. HE REJECTED OFFERS TO BE RETURNED TO HUNGARY AND CHOOSE TO STAY WITH THE MEN HE SERVED WITH. ALMOST EVERY EVENING HE WOULD RISK HIS LIFE FOR OTHERS BY SNEAKING OUT OF THE CAMP TO RETRIEVE FOOD AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES NEEDED TO ENCOURAGE AND NURSE FELLOW PRISONERS BACK TO HEALTH. HE IS CREDITED WITH SAVING OVER 40 PEOPLE'S LIVES AT CAMP 5.





REPATRIATION

ON APRIL 22, 1953 TIBOR RUBIN WAS REPATRIATED AT FREEDOM VILLAGE ON THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA.

MOH

CONGRESS PASSED THE LEONARD KRAVITZ JEWISH WAR VETERANS ACT IN 2002 WHICH DIRECTED THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO INVESTIGATE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE AWARDING OF MEDALS. IT WAS DETERMINED THAT TIBOR RUBIN HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION AND SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR. ON SEPTEMBER 23, 2005, 55 YEARS AFTER THE KOREAN WAR, CORPORAL TIBOR RUBIN RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FROM PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH.



VOLUNTEERING AT VA

FOR SEVERAL DECADES TIBOR RUBIN VOLUNTEERED AT THE VA MEDICAL CENTER IN LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA, WHERE HE WOULD LATER RECEIVE CARE AND WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY BE NAMED AFTER HIM. IN NOVEMBER, 2016, PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNED LEGISLATION RENAMING THE LONG BEACH CALIFORNIA VA MEDICAL CENTER AFTER RUBIN. ON MAY 10, 2017, THE MEDICAL CENTER WAS RENAMED IN HIS HONOR AS THE "TIBOR RUBIN VA MEDICAL CENTER" IN A WIDELY ATTENDED CEREMONY.



FAMILY LIFE

ON DECEMBER 5, 2015, OUR FRIEND AND HERO TIBOR RUBIN PASSED AWAY. TIBOR RUBIN IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS POSITIVE DISPOSITION, GRATITUDE TO THE UNITED STATES, LOYALTY TO HIS FELLOW MAN, PERSONAL COURAGE IN RISK OF HIS OWN LIFE TO CARE FOR HIS COMRADES, GREAT PERSONALITY, AND INCREDIBLE SENSE OF HUMOR.

"IN A PLACE WHERE THERE ARE NO MEN, STRIVE TO BE A MAN."
- ETHICS OF THE FATHERS (2:5)

CORPORAL TIBOR RUBIN'S

MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION

FOR CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY AND INTREPIDITY AT THE RISK OF HIS LIFE ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY, CORPORAL RUBIN DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM DURING THE PERIOD FROM JULY 23, 1950 TO APRIL 20, 1953 WHILE SERVING AS A RIFLEMAN WITH COMPANY I, 8TH CAVALRY REGIMENT, 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA.

WHILE HIS UNIT WAS RETREATING TO THE PUSAN PERIMETER, CORPORAL RUBIN WAS ASSIGNED TO STAY BEHIND TO KEEP OPEN THE VITAL TAEGU-PUSAN ROAD LINK USED BY HIS WITHDRAWING UNIT. DURING THE ENSUING BATTLE, OVERWHELMING NUMBERS OF NORTH KOREAN TROOPS ASSAULTED A HILL DEFENDED SOLELY BY CORPORAL RUBIN. HE INFLICTED A STAGGERING NUMBER OF CASUALTIES ON THE ATTACKING FORCE DURING HIS PERSONAL 24-HOUR BATTLE, SINGLE-HANDEDLY SLOWING THE ENEMY ADVANCE AND ALLOWING THE 8TH CAVALRY REGIMENT TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE ITS WITHDRAWAL.

FOLLOWING THE BREAKOUT

FROM THE PUSAN PERIMETER, THE 8TH CAVALRY REGIMENT PROCEEDED NORTHWARD AND ADVANCED INTO NORTH KOREA. DURING THE ADVANCE, HE HELPED CAPTURE SEVERAL HUNDRED NORTH KOREAN SOLDIERS. ON OCTOBER 30, 1950, CHINESE FORCES ATTACKED HIS UNIT AT UNSAN, NORTH KOREA, DURING A MASSIVE NIGHT-TIME ASSAULT. THAT NIGHT AND THROUGHOUT THE NEXT DAY, HE MANNED A .30 CALIBER MACHINE GUN AT THE SOUTH END OF THE UNIT'S LINE AFTER THREE PREVIOUS GUNNERS BECAME CASUALTIES. HE CONTINUED TO MAN HIS MACHINE GUN UNTIL HIS AMMUNITION WAS EXHAUSTED. HIS DETERMINED STAND SLOWED THE PACE OF THE ENEMY ADVANCE IN HIS SECTOR PERMITTING THE REMNANTS OF HIS UNIT TO RETREAT SOUTHWARD. AS THE BATTLE RAGED, CORPORAL RUBIN WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AND CAPTURED BY THE CHINESE.

CORPORAL TIBOR RUBIN'S AWARDS

MEDAL OF HONOR, PURPLE HEART WITH 1 BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER, PRISONER OF WAR MEDAL, ARMY OF OCCUPATION MEDAL WITH 'JAPAN' CLASP, NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL, KOREAN SERVICE MEDAL WITH 4 BRONZE CAMPAIGN STARS, UNITED NATIONS KOREA MEDAL, KOREAN WAR SERVICE MEDAL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION, AND COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE.

CHOOSING TO REMAIN IN THE

PRISON CAMP DESPITE OFFERS FROM THE CHINESE TO RETURN HIM TO HIS NATIVE HUNGARY, CORPORAL RUBIN DISREGARDED HIS OWN PERSONAL SAFETY AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN SNEAKING OUT OF THE CAMP AT NIGHT IN SEARCH OF FOOD FOR HIS COMRADES. BREAKING INTO ENEMY FOOD STOREHOUSES AND GARDENS, HE RISKED CERTAIN TORTURE OR DEATH IF CAUGHT. CORPORAL RUBIN PROVIDED NOT ONLY FOOD TO THE STARVING SOLDIERS, BUT ALSO DESPERATELY NEEDED MEDICAL CARE AND MORAL SUPPORT FOR THE SICK AND WOUNDED OF THE POW CAMP. HIS BRAVE, SELFLESS EFFORTS WERE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO SAVING THE LIVES OF AS MANY AS 40 OF HIS FELLOW PRISONERS.

CORPORAL RUBIN'S GALLANT ACTIONS IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY AND UNYIELDING COURAGE AND BRAVERY WHILE A PRISON OF WAR ARE IN THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF MILITARY SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON HIMSELF AND THE UNITED STATES ARMY.



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